



Legislative Testimony

OREGON DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

April 4, 2017

The Honorable Floyd Prozanski, Chair
Senate Committee on Judiciary

RE: Senate Bill 935

Chair Prozanski and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, for the record, I am Jeremiah Stromberg, Assistant Director of the Community Corrections Division for the Oregon Department of Corrections (DOC). I am here to share information related to SB 935, and answer any questions.

What the Bill Does:

SB 935 increases short term transitional leave (STTL) from 90 days to 180 days except for certain crimes, which would remain at 90 days.

Background Information:

For purposes of background, STTL was expanded from a 30 day program to 90 days under HB 3194 during the 13-15 biennium. To date, the program has been highly successful, resulting in more than 4,000 inmates releasing back to the community with a return rate of less than 5 percent, out of which, only 1 percent was returned for being arrested or convicted of a new crime during the transitional leave period. Through collaboration with community corrections agencies, this population has received access to expanded transitional housing, treatment and programming, intensive supervision when necessary, and the outcomes show for it. As you will hear from the Criminal Justice Commission, the STTL population is recidivating significantly less after two years compared to individuals who did not participate in the program. DOC has utilized this program as an incentive for positive behavior and motivation to complete treatment, and we have benefited from avoiding additional prison costs for a population that is doing very well on supervision.

Issues Addressed by the Bill:

As you consider expanding the program, I respectfully recommend consideration of the following:

- The 90 day program has had great support from the public safety community, including the courts, District Attorneys, Sheriffs, and community corrections. This has resulted in very few court orders prohibiting or preventing STTL for most eligible inmates. The same level of support is necessary for an expanded program to succeed.
- As these individuals are still classified as inmates, they are not eligible for Medicaid and Social Security benefits. This results in the need for more emergency room usage that otherwise would be avoided, so while DOC's costs may be driven down, other system costs may be increased.

- Counties have limited housing capacity. In 2016, 159 STTL inmates were denied their release to the program due to lack of housing. Just this week, Coos County informed the department that they cannot accept anyone who does not have an approved address for the foreseeable future. Expanding this program, which relies on County Grant in Aid funding, which is currently slated for a \$13 million reduction, and Justice Reinvestment funding, which is currently slated for an \$8 million reduction, will be impacted by these reductions, and could result in transitional leave periods much shorter than the 180 days proposed.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Submitted by:

Oregon Department of Corrections

Jeremiah Stromberg, Assistant Director

Jeremiah.p.stromberg@doc.state.or.us

Phone: (503) 945-8876